

The Urban Conservancy's Stay Local



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Geoff Coat, left, Dana Ennes and Ben Gauslin discuss strategies to foster business development among locally owned businesses at Gelato Pazzo on Oak Street.

Key innovation: an online database of locally owned and operated businesses in the New Orleans area
Biggest clients: local businesses
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Dana Ennes, executive director
Year introduced: 2003

In New Orleans, the phrase “locally owned and operated” refers to a class of business owners who maintain the unique local market.

Shoppers help to keep them afloat. In turn, initiatives such as the Urban Conservancy's Stay Local encourage consumers to support the local businesses.

“The Urban Conservancy is an entrepreneurially oriented not-for-profit, which advocates for the wise stewardship of New Orleans' urban fabric,” said Executive Director Dana Ennes. “Its flagship program, Stay Local, is a citywide initia-

tive to create a strong economy based on locally owned and operated businesses.”

Created in 2003, Stay Local is an Internet service that provides a directory of local businesses to the community. This listing helps link businesses to new markets and to resources.

According to Ennes, the online searchable directory, which is a free service for all eligible businesses, has grown to nearly 1,000 listings since its 2006 launch.

After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Stay Local was aware of new threats to local businesses, such as labor shortages, rebuilding costs and high insurance rates, Ennes said.

“In today's disaster recovery environment,” Ennes said, “Stay Local's projects have revolved around the question: What do New Orleans' traditional commercial corridors need to stabilize, sustain and grow existing businesses and attract new businesses and industries?”

One such business is Zeus' Place LLC, a dog and cat overnight boarding service that also offers dog daycare and

grooming. Owner Michelle Ingram listed her business on Stay Local.

“Stay Local has been incredibly valuable in helping me grow my business,” Ingram said. “Through them, I've been able to attract a wonderfully loyal clientele, enabling me to pass that first-year hump that is the downfall of so many new business ventures.”

Acting as a cheerleader for local businesses such as Zeus' Place, Stay Local strives to keep New Orleans, well, New Orleans.

“Now more than ever we need Stay Local,” Ingram said. “They are helping to keep New Orleans unique and locally owned. Without the help of people like Dana at Stay Local, New Orleans could easily turn in to the next large suburban sprawl with big box stores and no soul. It is through their tireless efforts that we remain the New Orleans that everyone loves and wants to rebuild and visit.”•

— Amy M. Ferrara